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S E R M O N
PREACHED AT
SITTINGBOURN,
ON
WEDNESDAY, June 11, 1800,
AT THE
VISITATION
OF THE
LORD ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY,
AND PUBLISHED BY HIS GRACE'S COMMAND.

BY THE REV. JEREMIAH JACKSON, M. A.

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SEERMON

ST. JAMES'S



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

AND THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

TO
THE MOST REVEREND THE
Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,

THIS SERMON IS INSCRIBED,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND DUTY,

By his Grace's most obedient,

and most obliged humble servant,

JEREMIAH JACKSON.

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JEREMIAH JACKSON

A
S E R M O N.

JOHN, CH. V. VER. 43, 44.

**I AM COME IN MY FATHER'S NAME, AND YE RECEIVE ME NOT:
IF ANOTHER SHALL COME IN HIS OWN NAME, HIM YE WILL
RECEIVE.
HOW CAN YE BELIEVE, WHICH RECEIVE HONOUR ONE OF ANO-
THER; AND SEEK NOT THE HONOUR THAT COMETH FROM
GOD ONLY?**

THE miracles, which our Saviour wrought day by day in the midst of the people, were strong and irrefragable proofs, that he was a teacher sent from God. Yet "he was despised and rejected of men."* False prophets came after him, and to "signs and lying wonders" in them was given that credit, which had been refused to "the mighty power of God" in Jesus Christ.

The cause of this unbelief in one instance, and credulity in the other, we learn from the text. Our Lord's precepts of meekness, of modesty, and humility, could not be reconciled with the osten-

* Isaiah liii, 3.

tatious practices of the age. He required his followers to seek that true honour, which cometh from the Father only: the Jews were satisfied with its shadow, which they received one of another; and preferred the breath of popular opinion to the solid approbation of Him, whose favour is life itself.

The same spirit of error hath continued to mislead the world ever since. All the corruptions of Christianity; all the schisms, which have interrupted the peace of the church; all the apostacy, which has dishonoured human nature, may be traced up to one source; a disposition to “love the praise of men, more than the praise of God.”† The hope of the hypocrite, and the presumption of the infidel, have been equally confirmed and encouraged by this.

Scarcely had Paul planted and Apollos watered, ere tares were mingled with the good seed. If “some preached Christ of good will; others did it even of envy and strife.”‡ So early did men of wicked devices teach perverse things, and draw disciples after them. These, “being alienated from the life of God,” § “walked after their own ungodly lusts,” || and propagated their lewd practices together with their unsound principles. As they increased in numbers, growing “presumptuous, self-willed, and despising government,”* they became dangerous to publick tranquillity, and private happiness. What has been their success, in these latter days, in corrupting the

† John xii, 43.—‡ Phil. i, 15.—§ Eph. iv, 18.—|| Jud. 18.—* 2 Pet. ii, 10.

morals, and destroying the comforts of society on the continent, where the evils, they have occasioned, are become intolerable, and yet the manners are so vitious, that it is doubtful whether the remedies can be born, we know too well: and since, from the vicinity of the plague, we ourselves are in danger, it may not be improper, on the present occasion, to endeavour to point out the rise and progress of delusion in our own country, and suggest means of arresting its course.

The Reformation delivered us from numerous evils, but could neither destroy the root, from which they sprung, nor prevent the growth of others. The love of praise was still the ruling passion with many, who professed to be influenced only by the fear of God. These ranged themselves with the champions of Truth, fought under her banners, but would not be restrained within her lines. The victory, which Reason had gained over Superstition, they were ambitious of extending to Faith also: and nothing, which exceeded their comprehension, would they admit as an article of their belief. They acknowledged that, in the natural government of the world, "the ways of God are past finding out;"† but they were unwilling to confess, that he might be equally mysterious in the moral. They searched the scriptures therefore to discover, not so much what Revelation professed, as what, they conceived, it ought to teach: and took not their opinions from the word, but wrested the word to their opinions. Each successive

† Rom. ii, 33.

teacher, affecting the praise of wit and learning above his fellows, and aiming at innovation more than improvement, formed his own system; and clothing sophistry in the garb of reason, imposed upon his followers, singularity of sentiment for soundness of judgment; novelty of opinion, for purity of doctrine. And as each valued himself on pre-eminence in knowledge rather than charity, speculation was substituted for practice; zeal in support of particular tenets, for obedience. Principles, never admitted by the church, or sanctioned by the word, were strenuously maintained; and, in the warmth of stubborn disputation, the plainest texts of scripture were perverted, even its authenticity questioned, when it stood in the way of a favourite hypothesis. Thus have the great, important articles of the Christian faith, one by one, been controverted, or denied, till, as all error is endless, the reformers themselves have not known where to stop; and the enemies of religion, encouraged by the weakness of these its pretended friends, have come boldly forward, and “beguiling many unstable souls,”† have “caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths.”§ So that depravity of manners growing with licentiousness of principle, the way hath been gradually opened for that portentous being, that “man of sin”, the modern Philosopher, whose coming, like that of the great dragon when cast out of heaven, hath been with, “woe to the inhabitants of the earth.”|| He is “of his father the Devil, and the lusts of his father he doth;”* for he would spread “strife and sedition, persecution and war,”† over the he-

† 2 Pet. ii, 14.—§ Jerem. xviii, 15.—|| Rev. xii, 12.—* Joh. viii, 44.—† St. Clement.

ritage of God. "By making those, who are of no renown, lift themselves against the honourable; those of no reputation, against those that are in respect,"† he would scatter disorder and desolation through the abodes of tranquillity and peace, and "make the world as a wilderness."§ His grand object is the subversion of every human institution intended for the benefit and happiness of man: and knowing that religion and social life are so intimately connected, that remove the fear of God, and no community can long subsist, he becomes the decided foe of all that is virtuous, of all that is amiable and good. Revelation, as laying the most powerful obstacles in his way, he assails by every means of fraud or force; and, under the specious title of Philosopher, he persuades men to prefer human discoveries to divine; as if philosophy were any thing but an inquiry after truth, and stronger attestation could be given to a proposition, than that "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."|| The aim of real philosophy, in all ages, hath been, to make men better as well as wiser; and whatever, so miscalled, separates knowledge from holiness, is a delusive meteor, that "leads but to bewilder, and dazzles but to blind."||

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;"* and, that to depart from him is the extreme of folly, has perhaps never been so exemplified, as in the Professor of this insane philosophy. When, by corrupting speculative truth, he has prepared the way for the overthrow of practical, he brings forth Licentiousness, and

† St. Clement.—§ Isaiah xiv, 17.—|| Beattie.—* Psalm cxi, 10.

calls it Liberty. The liberty of fools and madmen, which takes off the restraint of reason, and imposes that of appetite. He persuades his followers, that to be without government is to be free. He requires them to believe that he, who shuts his eyes to his first and most important duties, will not lose sight of secondary and subordinate ones; that his country may place dependance upon the man, who renounces his God. He brings in reason to the overthrow of religion, though the reasonableness of religion is its best recommendation. He affects the most severe scrutiny of the strongest arguments in favour of revelation, and is blindly led by the weakest against it. He boasts of superiour knowledge, and yet suffers himself to be imposed upon in his most important interests. When by corrupting the soul, by robbing the virtuous of hope, and relieving the wicked from fear, he has disposed them to acts of blood and violence; to rending asunder every tie which links society together, he pretends, that on a foundation such as this, he will erect a stable, a lasting empire: that he will "make wars to cease in all the world," * and diffuse the blessings "of peace so long as the moon endureth." †

"The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil:" ‡ and from these very preachers of unrighteousness may the inhabitants of the world learn wisdom. They may remark, how far religion is necessary to the wellbeing of man, from the confusion and disorder, the misery and distress,

* Psalm xlv, 9.—† Psalm lxxii, 7.—‡ Prov. xvi, 4.

which have ensued from its overthrow. They may be encouraged to hold fast the happiness they enjoy, in living under a free and regular government, by observing, that the blessings, so ostentatiously proffered by these innovators, have proved the ruin and destruction of men, the fall of liberty, the subversion of the rights of nations. They may see the folly of meddling with those, who are given to change, in the weakness and instability of usurped authority in a neighbouring kingdom; where, of the numerous constitutions, which, in the lapse of a few years, have been formed on these new principles, not one has stood the test of time and experience. Each in its turn hath been brought forward, as the most stupendous monument of human genius; and yet each has dissolved as a vision of the night, excepting only the vestiges of desolation, which it hath left behind. Each hath served to shew, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God; and that the greatest politicians are enveloped in darkness, when they turn from the two first principles of government, "Fear God, and Honour the King." ||

Happily for us, we have hitherto learned the pernicious effects of this philosophy from foreign, rather than domestick examples. In vain hath it armed against us the open enemy without, and the secret assassin within. We have proved ourselves, in the present day, worthy of the elogy bestowed upon us in a former one: "That we know better than any nation upon earth, how to value

our Religion and our Liberty." * Here they have been protected, while on the continent Tyranny hath "wasted the cities," and made "the whole land a desolation:" † while Infidelity hath been taking such gigantick strides, that the time seemed rapidly approaching, when, if the Son of Man should come, it might be doubted, whether he would "find faith upon the earth." ‡ It hath been our felicity, not only to maintain freedom at home, but to give life and vigour to exertions in its defence abroad: and tyrants, which have not God before their eyes, have been taught that, as Christianity cannot be propagated, so neither can it be extirpated by the sword. But the hopes of our enemy, though diminished, are not destroyed; though defeated, he is not discouraged: baffled in his attempts to overthrow, he still seeks to undermine. He endeavours to weaken our faith, that he may rob us of our support; to corrupt our ways that the Lord our "defence may depart from us." § He well knows that, "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" || and he aims at subverting the one by removing the other; that so, "he may beat the people in pieces, and grind the faces of the poor." *---Here then opens a field for us: our brethren in arms have gloriously withstood the assaults of open war; it is for us to resist the advances of covert guile: they have sheltered their country from the storm without, it is ours to bruise the worm within. And the services we may render the state, though not equally brilliant, may yet be as important, as extensive as their's.

* Montesquieu.—† Jerem. xxv, 11.—‡ Luke xviii, 8.—§ Numbers xiv, 9.

|| 2 Cor. iii, 17.—* Isaiah, iii, 15.

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While we cordially join in enthusiastick admiration of the bravery which has dazzled the whole world, we may be permitted to hope, that those efforts also for the publick good, which are meritorious, only as they are modest and humble, will not lose their reward. Something is due to men, who, by forming the people to holiness and virtue, render them worthy of enjoying, and preserving, and handing down to distant posterity, the blessings of liberty and peace. Neither will our difficulties be few, or our task easy. Our fortitude and perseverance will both be put to the test. The voice of the slanderer and blasphemer was never raised with equal confidence before. Infidelity is openly propagated in our streets, or secretly whispered in our chambers, through every part of the kingdom: and such is the lukewarmness and indifference of numbers, who profess themselves friends to religion, that they betray the cause, they would be thought to support. They affect to be zealous for the altar of God, yet seldom or never bring their gifts there; they call themselves his servants, yet come not near his sanctuary: while they pretend to cherish the hope of Christianity, they violate its duties, wound the conscience of the weak, and “give the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme.” † To mingle, therefore, with the world, and not only to keep ourselves unspotted, but to preserve or recover others from the contagion of its vices; to render them insensible to that scorn, by which the apostate would put virtue out of countenance, or deaf to the insidious praises, by which he would recommend vice; to counteract that natural bias, which

† 2 Sam. xii, 14.

inclines them to follow the multitude; to check that false emulation, which leads them to admire and to imitate those, who prosper in the world, and whom the world applauds; and to rekindle that love, which from the prevalence of iniquity hath in many waxed cold, is a work of no small labour and severity. Where men "will not endure sound doctrine," ‡ painful, in proportion as it is unprofitable, will be the task of the preacher. And some resolution is necessary, to bear with those who affect to reproach us for holding slavish opinions, that they may drive us to licentious ones; or to withstand the artifices of men, who, where they cannot drive, would seduce; who, by flattering our self-love, would mislead our judgment, and render us unstable in our faith, that we may the sooner depart out of the way, and cause many who follow us as guides to stumble. No man's errors are so dangerous as his, who, when he ought to be an example, proves an offence; and never was the call of duty more imperious than now, to "take heed to ourselves and to our doctrine:" § to "lay not other foundation for what we teach than Jesus Christ," || and to exemplify our precepts in our lives. The same faith, the same practice, the same patience, and perseverance in well doing, which the first Christians opposed to "the rulers of the darkness of this world," * must support us against those, who would re-establish "the power of darkness." † The virtues, by which our religion was cultivated, when it was only as a grain of mustard-seed, are no less necessary now, that it has taken root and filled the earth; not in-

‡ 2 Tim. iv, 3.—§ 1 Tim. iv, 16.—|| 1 Cor. iii, 11.—* Ephes. vi, 12.—† Luke xxii, 53:

deed to preserve the tree, for against that the gates of hell shall not prevail, but to save the branches. Here then we fix: to that "form of sound words," "which was once delivered to the Saints" ‡ we adhere; by that we live, and for that we ought not to refuse to die: We have the lessons of our Lord and his Apostles for our instruction, their lives for an example; their steps we are bound to follow; and no worldly consideration, no argument of man's wisdom, no love of false glory, or fear of unmerited reproach, should influence us to turn either to the right hand or the left. The first error, when the purity of the gospel was abandoned for "cunningly devised fables," § hath been the means of bringing the Christian world, step by step, to its present confused and disorderly state; and our best, our only resource is, to lead men back to that original purity of faith and practice, which our church still maintains, and by which it hath preserved itself unshaken amid the storms of revolutionary rage: to preach that plain and simple gospel, which was first proclaimed to the poor, and open to the capacities of babes, rather than those novel doctrines, recommended by the wit and subtilty of "the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world." || Doctrines by which, to gratify human pride, human reason hath been exalted too high, and revelation too lightly esteemed. The lover of truth will maintain a due reverence for each, and consider both as divine lights, only different in degree: Reason prepares the way for Revelation, and makes it credible, and what in Reason is dark, Revelation illumines; thus one requires the

‡ Jude iii.—§ 2 Pet. i, 16.—|| 1 Cor. i, 20.

aid of the other, and both conspire to the instruction and improvement of man. But the Theorist in religion, substituting the wild phantasms of a warm imagination for the sober deductions of sound argument, makes Reason paramount to Revelation, prescribes bounds to the latter, and says, "hitherto shalt thou come but no further:" * while the Philosopher rejects it altogether, and setting up Reason as "the God of his idolatry," robs his followers of the light of both, and, wherever he prevails, exiles truth and happiness from the haunts of men, and fills them with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." † But however "the man of the earth" may for a time "exalt himself," "he that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh him to scorn." ‡ Darkness may perhaps, "for the wickedness of them that dwell therein," § be permitted for a season to cover the earth; yet shall the "Sun of Righteousness" dispel the mists that involve us, and, bursting in one unclouded blaze, replenish the world with glory. Let us "possess our souls in patience," || and "endure unto the end," till the just pleasure of God shall have been performed, and he "in his own time will shew" not the triumph of Revelation over Reason, or of Reason over Revelation, for it is impossible that there should ever be any opposition between them, but the triumph of Revelation and Reason united.

* Job xxxviii, 11.—† Ezech. ii, 10.—‡ Psalm ii, 4.—§ Psalm cvii, 34.—|| Luke xxi, 19.

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